

Butterfly Clinic 14/9/24
Notes by Barry Green (15/9/24)

Elena gave this clinic to 12 swimmers in the outdoor 10 lane pool (50 m), and on deck three coaches and one other.

Poolside activities.

Elena stressed the need for mobility (hips, shoulders, ankles) and then asked the swimmers what they perceived as “sticking points” with the fly stroke. The answers were;

1. Pausing at the front of the stroke (before the arm pull).
2. Momentum and stamina (related to 1).
3. Head action (not in the water too early and breathing pattern).

With floor mats Elena guided the swimmers through some exercises to help with the stroke.

- A. With one knee on the ground and the other leg forward (right angle bends at the knee), tighten the glutes and stretch through the hip flexor (without pressing the vertical body forward). Then change legs.
- B. Lying face down with arms extended in front, bring both arms back (slowly – “angel wings”) with thumbs down so that the arms end up folded on the back. Repeat 5 times.
- C. Up on knees, head down, stretch arms forward and hold for 30 s. Feel the lats work.
- D. Standing. Turn one foot inwards (pigeon toe) and stretch the tip of the foot and hold. Change feet.

With ageing, the thoracic spine, shoulders and hips stiffen, so exercises are required to counter this. Fly uses the most energy of all the strokes so there are ways to reduce the loading e.g., breaststroke kick (this can be used at any time alternating with the dolphin kick) and front end-glide (pause the kick during the glide and keep front end extension). However, care is required with these stroke modifications. Note there is a maximum of 2 kicks to one arm cycle. Elbows must clear the water on recovery.

Pool Drills

After a warm-up (100 m);

P1. Push off on surface (no kick) initially position 11 (relaxed head down, with arms stretched forward shoulder width apart), reposition arms to beside hips and then gently lift arms over the water like angel wings (slowly) and recover (no pull). Keep head in neutral (eyes down) and shoulders relaxed. Thumbs down towards surface of water and knuckles forward. Repeat slowly. Can be done with a pull buoy if preferred. FINS ON.

P2. Push off on surface in position 11 with small hip undulation Starting from the sternum, push hips down and up). Increase amplitude of undulation, as confidence grows. Think of pressing the front of the hips towards the bottom of the pool and then pushing them away without moving head and shoulders.

P3. As for P2 with arms performing “angel wings” every now and then followed by recovery (no catch & pull). Increase kick power.

P4. Single or double arm stroke with established kick. Get the timing right – hips go up as hands go in (kick), hips go down as hands come out (kick), and repeat.

These drills with fins should be continued until proficiency is gained and then the fins can be removed. Correct timing is ESSENTIAL.